

Prince William County Public Schools **Crisis/Emergency Preparedness**



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Dear Parents

The safety of students and employees in the Prince William County Public Schools is paramount at all times. It is for this reason that all schools and departments have developed crisis management plans to ensure the school division's capability to be responsive to a variety of emergencies. In addition, the school division communicates daily with county police and cooperates closely with state and local law enforcement, government officials, and state and local public health, safety, and emergency agencies.

Disseminating accurate information and communicating school division actions for the duration of a crisis/emergency is a high priority. All available means of communication will be used to keep the community informed, including telephone trees, the school division information line (703-791-2776), E-news (e-mail subscription service), the web site, www.pwcs.edu, and Channel 21.

This booklet outlines some of the key elements of the school division's state of preparedness. It is our hope that this information answers the questions you have concerning the actions and intentions with regard to your children while they are in school or traveling to or from school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Edward L. Kelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names being more prominent.

Edward L. Kelly, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

COUNTY AND SCHOOLS WORK TOGETHER

The basic Emergency Operations Plan for Prince William County incorporates the school division in a supporting role to the Prince William County Department of Social Services. The Prince William County School division's area of responsibility during a County emergency consists of the following components of the County Emergency Operations Plan:

- Providing emergency shelter and temporary housing. All school sites are subject to emergency shelter designation.
- Providing emergency and temporary food services.
- Providing transportation for displaced persons.

Prince William County School division support services, including custodial, food service, maintenance, and security will be provided on a stand-by basis, ready to support the shelter operations when notified by the Department of Social Services of the Office of Emergency Services.

SECURITY MEASURES IN PLACE

Security measures in place within Prince William County Public Schools and buildings comply with the federal school safety plan and ensure that the school division is responsive to a variety of crises and emergencies. These measures include:

- Daily review of local, national, and global events by the Superintendent and his senior staff;
- Maintaining heightened state of vigilance;
- Employee and visitor identification system;
- School security residents on many school campuses;
- PWCPs anonymous tip line;
- Security patrols of schools;
- Security cameras in schools and other buildings;
- Emergency communication and messaging systems;
- County police officers in all middle and high schools;
- Video cameras on school buses;
- Threat assessment; and
- Designation of Emergency Team responsibilities.

CRISIS RESPONSE READINESS OF SCHOOLS

School division policies and the division Crisis Management Plan provide the framework for addressing emergencies that may occur during school hours and business hours. The Crisis Management Plan manual includes guidelines on how to respond to biological, chemical, and other terrorist attacks.

Each school has emergency and contingency plans in place to respond to weather, weapons, or medically related emergencies. Staff members from the Prince William County Public Schools' Department of Risk Management and Security conduct on-site crisis training for school personnel. Schools follow up on this crisis response training and pre-plan for emergencies including command post and crisis communication issues, logistics, release of information, sheltering, evacuation, student accounting/release to parents, medical response, media coverage, and post-event counseling for students and staff. All buildings have evacuation plans and conduct periodic drills to assess the effectiveness of the evacuation procedures.

The Department of Transportation is responsible for coordinating the safe return of children to their homes or to alternate shelter locations. Should a crisis/emergency situation occur while students are in the process of being transported to or from school, school bus drivers will contact the Department of Transportation for instructions. If necessary, parents will be informed of an alternate location for picking up their children via the school division's crisis/messaging system.

Each school also has a crisis response team that is an integral part of the school's emergency management plan. The crisis response team includes school psychologists, counselors, teachers, and administrators. The Prince William County Public Schools Department of Student Services dispatches critical incident teams of counselors, psychologists, student assistance program specialists, and nurses to schools as needed during and after emergencies to provide support to students and staff.

PWCPS RESPONSE TO HOMELAND THREAT CONDITIONS

Prince William County Public Schools is persistent in conducting an ongoing review of the school division's readiness and ability to respond in the event of a crisis. The PWCPS Crisis Management Plan details procedures for responding to emergencies and is in compliance with the framework for preparedness established by the Homeland Security Advisory System. All schools have a crisis response team that is an integral part of the school's emergency management plan.

Response to crises may differ depending on the circumstances; however the protective measures described below are applicable and may be implemented under the nation's security code system;

Low Condition (GREEN)

Low risk of terrorist attacks.

- Review and refine school crisis plans.
- Update emergency contact information.
- Continue inter-agency collaboration on County's emergency preparedness plan.
- Maintain employee and visitor identification system.

Guarded Condition (BLUE)

General risk of terrorist attacks.

In addition to implementation of the above protective measures, the following actions will be taken:

- Test communications with designated emergency response or command locations.
- Review and practice emergency response procedures.
- Provide resource information to employees, parents, and community.
- Ensure compliance with Employee and Visitor Identification Procedure (Regulation 501-6).

Elevated Condition (YELLOW)

Significant risk of terrorist attacks.

In addition to protective measures listed above, the following actions will be taken:

- Assess increased risk with public safety officials.
- Increase surveillance of critical locations.
- Review Crisis Management Plans with school division staff.
- Ensure coordination of emergency plans with Prince William County.
- Refine protective measures at school facilities.

High Condition (ORANGE)

High risk of terrorist attacks.

In addition to protective measures listed above, the following actions will be taken:

- Assess increased risk with public safety officials and enhance security efforts as necessary.
- Take additional precautions at public events and consider alternate venues or cancellation.
- Review and modify field trip requests as appropriate.
- Review employee contact list and callback procedure with employees.
- Increase facility surveillance by staff.
- Increase communications with parents and the community.

Severe Condition (RED)

Severe risk of terrorist attacks.

In addition to previously outlined protective measures, the following actions will be taken:

- Provide staff members to Prince William County Emergency Operations Center.
- Activate PWCPS Incident Command Center.
- Assess threat level to determine status of school openings and closings.
- Address critical emergency needs in cooperation with public safety officials and in accordance with the Crisis Management Plan.
- Coordinate parent-student reunification process, if necessary.
- Enhance staff, parent, and community communication.
- Increase or redirect personnel to address critical emergency needs.

KEEPING INFORMED THROUGH CRISIS/EMERGENCY MESSAGES

PWCPS transmits crisis/emergency messages when necessary using the following media:

- Web site at www.pwcs.edu
- Information Line 703-791-2776
- Local radio and television station broadcasts
- School telephone trees
- Prince William County eNotifications System

Keeping phone lines accessible - Parents are asked not to call the school in emergency situations so that the phone lines can remain accessible for handling the crisis/emergency.

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

Our first priority is keeping children safe. Under some circumstances, the safest place for children can be their school. Parents should be aware that outdoor activities, sports events, and field trips might be canceled to reduce the risk of danger for students.

If federal authorities announce that the threat condition is red, indicating a severe threat of a terrorist attack, the school division will follow directions provided by health and public safety officials. Under Severe Condition (Red), schools will “shelter-in-place” the students that are in their buildings. Students in trailers will be brought into school buildings.

Lockdown

A “Lockdown” event occurs when there is an immediate hostile threat to the school. This may be an intruder, a firearms event, or an enraged non-custodial parent trying to take their child from school. A “lockdown” announcement is made and all staff and students seek immediate cover in a locked room. All school activities cease and 911 is called. All staff and students remain in “lockdown” until released by the police or an “all clear” announcement is made by school personnel.

Shelter-in-Place

A “Shelter-in-Place” event occurs when there is a threat in the vicinity of the school. This may be a hazardous material spill or police action in the area. In order to ensure the safety and health of students, the school campus is secured and visitors are closely scrutinized or not allowed in the school at all depending on the event. Activities inside the school continue. Depending upon the specific event, students may be required to remain in school for an extended period; for example, in the event of a biological threat. It is the school division’s goal to return children to their parent/guardian as soon as it is determined to be safe to do so. The school division follows the directions provided by health and public safety officials.

- Shelter-in-place is a temporary measure (i.e. minutes or hours, not days) designed to utilize a school/facility and its indoor atmosphere to separate students and staff from a hazardous outdoor environment or acts of violence that have occurred in the vicinity of the school.
- Neutral pressure is created in the school/facility by closing all windows and doors, and shutting down the heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning system so that contaminated air will not be drawn into the building.

Environmental Hazards

Designated school staff members respond to various health emergencies and work closely with public health officials.

- In situations involving environmental hazards, staff assist students who show symptoms of exposure to biological or chemical contaminants.
- Basic decontamination involves separating the exposed student from other students and directing the child to wash thoroughly with soap and water.
- If possible, staff will allow the student to take a shower and provide alternate clothing. Exposed clothing will be placed and sealed in plastic bags.

Field Trips

Field trips will be canceled division-wide during a crisis/emergency situation. Cancellation information will be announced via the school division's crisis/emergency messaging system.

Stockpiling of Food and Water

School sites maintain limited supplies of food and beverages should the need arise for additional food services.

Students Requiring Medication

Parents of students who require medication are asked to make sure that the school has an appropriate amount of medication on hand. The appropriate amount should be based upon advice from the student's physician.

Student Access to News Broadcasts

School staff will limit the use of television and radio broadcasts in classrooms to avoid overexposure to media reports. Principals will use discretion in determining the appropriateness of the use of media broadcasts.

Bus Transportation Under Condition Red

- Should a crisis/emergency situation occur while students are in the process of being transported to and from school, school bus drivers will contact the Department of Transportation for instructions. If necessary, parents will be informed of the parent-student alternate shelter location via the crisis/emergency messaging system.
- Following the crisis/emergency announcement, school personnel will attempt to contact parents through the telephone tree. When deemed appropriate by public safety officials, elementary students will be held until parents are contacted.
- If school personnel are unable to contact parents or emergency care providers due to a telephone outage, high school and middle school students will be released. Elementary students will be held until parents or emergency care providers are contacted.
- Students will be permitted to leave the school with parents and/or other individuals who have written authorization.
- Bus drivers will report to the Department of Transportation when all students have been delivered to their homes.

PARENT-STUDENT REUNIFICATION PROCESS

Evacuation of Schools

- If a crisis/emergency occurs during school hours or school activities, PWCPS does not intend to keep children from their parents.
- School will not automatically be canceled in a crisis/emergency situation. School may well be the safest place for students. The school division will ensure that students are safe inside their schools until such time that the threat has been reduced.
- Parents will be informed of the alternate shelter location via the school division's crisis/emergency messaging system.

Release of Students to Parents

- Should public safety officials enforce the evacuation of a school, students and staff members will be safely transported by bus to a designated parent-student alternate shelter location. Students may be held at this alternate shelter site for various reasons until release is approved by public safety or health officials depending on the circumstances of the event.
- Parents will be permitted to pick up their children unless public safety officials have restricted access to the school during a shelter-in-place response or there is some other reason why access to the school has been restricted.
- Students will only be released to those individuals authorized on the school emergency card or who have written permission from a parent or guardian.
- Parents will be required to present proper identification in order for students to be released from an alternate shelter location.

The Virginia Freedom of Information Act permits the exclusion of the release of parent-student alternate shelter locations in advance of a crisis/emergency situation. This helps to avoid any confusion should circumstances require that a change be made to a previously designated shelter location.

PWCPS School Board

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703-330-4846	
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703-490-0528	
Edward L. Kelly, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools	703-791-8712

WHEN CRISIS OCCURS: A QUICK REFERENCE FOR PARENTS

A crisis or safety concern may occur at any time in our community or in neighboring communities. Children may be confused and/or frightened by information they hear in conversations and in news reports, and they will look to adults for guidance as to how to react. The following quick reference offers parents suggestions for establishing a sense of security and safety to help their children cope in a crisis situation. Additionally, following a crisis, the school psychologist, school social worker, school counselors, and members of the school division's Critical Incident Team are available to assist students.

Emotional Support:

- Limit the amount of exposure your child has to newspapers and televised news reports. Repetitive discussion of the situation may re-traumatize a child.
- Be honest with your children about what has occurred and provide facts about what has happened. Use age appropriate terms for better understanding.
- Encourage your child to talk to you about his or her feelings and concerns. Share your feelings with your child.
- Reassure your child that he/she is safe.
- Spend extra time with your child, especially doing something fun or relaxing for both of you.
- Remember the importance of touch. A hug can reassure your child that he/she is loved.
- Watch for ongoing signs of difficulty, which could indicate that your child may need additional help. Some warning signs are: withdrawal from social contact, change in eating or sleeping habits, nightmares, and unusual clinging.

Safety Support:

- Review basic safety precautions.
- Review family safety procedures so your children will feel prepared if an emergency situation occurs.
- Monitor and supervise your child's outdoor (play) activities.
- Know where your child is at all times and whom your child is with.
- Pre-arrange a place where your children should go in the event you are delayed and are not home at the end of the school day.
- Remind your child to always report any suspicious persons or activity to a trusted adult.

CRISIS/EMERGENCY RESOURCES

In addition to the resources below, the Student Services Department has information regarding referrals for appropriate support services within the schools and community. The department can be contacted at (703) 791-7257.

Student Services Resources:

- When Crisis Occurs: A Quick Reference for Parents
- Children's Reactions to Disasters
- Helping Children Cope with Disaster
- Warning Signs of Trauma-Related Stress for Adults
- Children's Reactions to Traumatic Events
- How Children Respond to Trauma
 - Ages 1-6
 - Ages 6-11
 - Ages 12-18

Website Resources:

- www.nasponline.org (National Association of School Psychologists)
 - "Helping Children Cope in Unsettling Times: Tips for Parents and Teachers"
 - "Coping in Unsettling Times: Tips for Students"
 - "Parents Called to Active Duty – Helping Children Cope"
 - "Children's Reaction to Trauma: Suggestions for Parents"
 - "Helping Children Cope with Violence and Terror: Tips for Parents and Teachers"
 - "Children and Fear of War and Terrorism: Tips for Parents and Teachers"
- www.aacap.org (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)
 - "Talking to Children about Terrorism and War"
 - "Families in the Military"
- www.ready.gov/ (U.S. Department of Homeland Security)
 - "Preparing Makes Sense – Get an Overview"
- www.fema.gov/kids (Federal Emergency Management Agency – FEMA for Kids)
 - An interactive site on disaster for children
- www.pwarc.org (Prince William Chapter American Red Cross)
 - "Disaster Preparedness – Facing Fear: Helping Young People Deal with Terrorism and Other Tragic Events" (For Teachers)



This brochure was produced through the collaborative efforts of the Departments of Information Services, Risk Management and Security, and Student Services.

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